

NEWSLETTER



ARBORETA & BOTANIC GARDENS

prepared by the public services division

March 10, 1975

PUBLIC SERVICES DIVISION

Ray Robinson is leaving us again and we are greatly disappointed to see him go. Ray first worked at the Arboretum as an as-needed tour guide in 1971 and 1972. After spending the following two years in Egypt teaching English and art at the American University in Cairo, he returned to us as a permanent tour guide last September. He and his wife, Kathy, are now leaving for Iran where they will spend at least two years.

Ray has been a great asset to the department, being an excellent tour guide and field trip leader, a proficient multilith press operator, talented artist, and enthusiastic birdman and leader of Sunday morning bird walks. We wish him and Kathy the best of luck.

SOUTH COAST DIVISION

Visitors to the garden in late February saw half the staff busy with brooms and other paraphernalia sweeping out the inch or so of sand and silt left in the lake from the last rain. This rather strange-looking behavior was in preparation for the application of the final coating of sealant to the lake membrane scheduled for the first Wednesday in March. Word about the lake must have gotten out because three cinnamon teal were seen swimming in a puddle also left by the rain right by the lake.

February also brought sure signs of spring. Many of the flowering fruit trees have burst into bloom. Along with the fruit trees, forsythia and even a few coral trees came into flower. All these flowers have provided enough food so that several hummingbirds have nested and fledged their young already. Two species of hummingbird are now year-round residents of the peninsula, since the planting of introduced species provides flowers all year. A great change in the environment, but certainly not for the worst.

Tony Gonzalez has been promoted to gardener. Immediately he went out and bought a new car, for necessity's sake as much as for pleasure. Tony has been one of our bicycle commuters but his new position is in Arcadia and that's a bit too far for two wheels. Tony has left, but Susan Jurist has joined the staff as our new part-time secretary. Susan will be here in the afternoons while devoting her mornings to her artistic endeavors. Susan isn't really new to the garden. She has been a

regular weekend visitor as an active member of the Bromeliad Society. Several volunteers are helping out with office duties in the mornings so we are in good hands.

RESEARCH DIVISION

At last, a mutual seed exchange program between LASCA and botanical gardens inside the Bamboo Curtain is established. That any kind of exchange program in plant material has taken place between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China is a break-through. As reported earlier last year, we have received seed catalogs from three botanical gardens from PRC out of ten we contacted. Two of them requested seeds from us. But for over a year we did not receive any response to our request for seeds until last week. Seeds received from the Nanking Sun Yet-sen Botanical Gardens include *Kalopanax Pictus* (tree to 80 ft., leaves resemble Castor bean plant), *Aleurites fordii* (Tung oil tree) and *Cunninghamia lanceolata* (China fir). We hope that we can establish correspondence with other botanical gardens in different geographical areas inside mainland China.

DESCANSO DIVISION

The Old Fashioned Rose Garden is being transplanted to the Modern Rose Garden, and the Modern to the Old Fashioned Rose area which is larger and will provide room for the regular increase in modern roses. A "spaghetti watering system" is being installed at the same time. Garner Engel and his crew are handling the digging, soil preparation, and planting; Nat Jackson is heading up the job of pipe installation.

Dr. Jean DeLaCour, a longtime director of the County Museum now retired and living in Normandy, France, spent an afternoon walking through the Gardens. Mr. DeLaCour was instrumental years ago in persuading the County Supervisors to purchase Descanso Gardens. Mr. DeLaCour is an outstanding horticulturist and one of the world's leading authorities on birds.

Each month all County personnel who have put in twenty-five years come to Descanso Gardens to a luncheon and to receive a twenty-five-year pin. Recently our own Dan Martel was the first person in the Department to have reached that milestone. Congratulations Danny!

During March, the alumni of the Otis Art Institute, together with the Los Angeles County Employees Association, will exhibit their paintings in the Hospitality House.

An area adjacent to the Native Plant Section will be used as an experimental plot for fire retardant plants. Ken Montgomery and his crew have just planted 600 hybrid *Cistus*. These plants, classified as slow burners, will hopefully furnish enough plants in the future to aid in the strengthening of the valuable watershed in our mountainous areas of the Southland.

ARBORETUM DIVISION

We want to welcome our new employees and congratulate those receiving promotions. Ed Brooks is now on full-time staff. Tsuneo Imanishi was promoted to nurseryman. Tony Gonzalez came from South Coast and was promoted to gardener. We have a new Ceta employee, Fred Ballesteros.

Earl Breitbarth is doing a beautiful job on the new office in administration.

The Begonia House at the Arboretum has been landscaped so as to make the display of the different species more effective educationally and esthetically. Chuck Hewitt designed and planted the house under the supervision of Tim Lorman, Arboretum horticulturist.

EDUCATION DIVISION

998 schools in Los Angeles County participated in the Department's Arbor Day (March 7) program. Each school received a 5-gallon size Cassia leptophylla grown by our nursery and a teacher resource packet assembled by Las Voluntarias. Our thanks to the many staff members and volunteers in making Arbor Day a successful Departmental activity.